

My name is Dr. Lisa Weisinger, I live at 3 Fawn Brook in West Hartford. I would like to thank Committee chairs Senator Cathy Osten, Senator Paul Formica and Representative Toni Walker and the rest of the committee for reading this testimony.

I have a 22 year old son, Jamie, who has Down syndrome who would have become Connecticut's next victim of the governor's budget if the legislature had not intervened last year and put money back into the budget for new graduates. If the governor's budget continues to hammer away at the very core of DDS, there will be a waiting list for Day Services and Job Supports in addition to the extensive waiting list for residential supports. All of the work our children have done for the past 14 years will have been for naught. The weight of this new round of budget cuts is devastating to families with young adults exiting the school system. Have our children spent the last 14 years learning the maze of social graces and academic achievement just so they can sit at home with their aging parents and be alone? Our young adults deserve to be an integral part of our community, not shunned because they need assistance.

Are we going to be that kind of society that throws away its most vulnerable citizens? Can you imagine their despair when they find out that there is nothing for them after they graduate? What would you do if one of these graduates were your son? How loud would you scream knowing that the state of CT has chosen to balance the budget on the back of your child? As legislators, you have the power to tell our young adults that they matter and the great state of CT values their lives. Please take a stand on the moral and ethical ground of caring for our children and put the money back into DDS system. The governor has made great strides this budget cycle to include money for residential services within DDS. Presently, there are 2,000 people waiting for a residential placement and have been waiting for decades. The Governor's continued cuts to DDS will cause a new waiting list for Day Services. What will happen to those of us who will need DDS funds to help support our young adults in their employment or day services?

The DDS system needs to be revamped to cut out the inequities and help support the majority. The antiquated dual private vs public system needs a complete overhaul. The devaluation of our adult children while people are being served at STS and regional centers for over \$400,000 per

person is criminal. It is time to take stock of the 90% of the people served by DDS within the private sector. It is also time we recognize that all of our family members are valued citizens. Let us start the revolution by saying “NO” to institutions! Our family members belong within the community where they can live a life of meaning for ¼ the price that the state is paying for them in the institutions. The savings from closing the institutions will pave the way for all of Connecticut’s citizens with ID to receive DDS funding without having to increase the DDS budget.

My son, Jamie, is an integral part of our community. With DDS support, he goes to work with a job coach and earns minimum wage. He pays taxes on his earnings and spends his money within our community. Our hope is the same hope that everyone has for his/her own child, that he grows up happy, has friends and lives in a community.

What about those parents who have to work to support their families? If there is a new waiting list for Day Supports, who will stay home with their children? The choices are an abomination to civilized society. They either choose their child and lose their job or choose their job and their child stays home all day, every day, by him/herself. Many more families will need state assistance because they are no longer able to work. It will end up costing the state more money to cut the budget in DDS.

I urge you to continue the great work that you are doing for all of us in Connecticut. We rely on you to make the socially responsible choices that govern this great state. On behalf of my entire family, please put the money back into the DDS budget for new graduates and the \$400,000 cuts to Family Support Grants need to be reversed. Please support the governor’s \$3.8 million budget to support developing more residential options for people with I/DD and stabilize community based supports.

Thank You,

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